The Builder.
No. CXCIV.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1846.

ROBERT TAYLOR, born 1714, was the son of a mason, and received but an ordinary school education. In due time his father placed him under Sir Henry Cheere, the sculptor, and after a certain number of years gave him a small sum of money, and sent him to Rome to study his art. Hardly, however, had he settled himself to work before he was recalled to see his father die; and, travelling then not being quite so easy a matter as it is now, when men can as safely and pleasantly journey to Rome as into their next county, and a visit to the Pyramids may be paid before your friends know that you are out of town,—was compelled to disguise himself, according to Milizia, as a Franciscan friar to avoid detention. When he arrived, however, his father was dead, and had left no provision for his family: like too many in our time, more even than then, he had lived much beyond his income, and so died a beggar. Our hero, therefore, was compelled to strive for himself, and began the world as a statuary with eighteen pence in his pocket. Being assiduous and energetic, he appears soon to have got into notice, and executed, amongst other works, the figure of Britannia at the Bank of England, and the bas relief in the pediment of the Mansion House, London.

Circumstances then led him to abandon sculpture for architecture, and his course became a prosperous one in a remarkable degree: he erected many buildings, and was appointed successively surveyor to the Admiralty, Foundling Hospital, Greenwich Hospital, and the Bank of England.*

In 1783, when sheriff of London, he was knighted,† and five years afterwards died at his house in Spring-gardens, and left 180,000*l.* behind him.

This house, now No. 34, occupied as the private residence of Mr. Barrack, the owner of the adjoining hotel, remains for the most part as Sir Robert left it, and within-side displays an artistical feeling, exhibited by a greater sacrifice of room and convenience than we should now be willing to make. The principal apartments are octagonal or circular in plan; the staircase is also of the latter form, and is adorned with heads from the antique on brackets.

Sir Robert left the bulk of his property to his only son, Michael Angelo Taylor, whose name attaches to a well known Act of Parliament, to be applied, after accumulating for a period of time, in founding a college in Oxford for the study of modern languages,—in consequence of which it is, that we have been led to introduce the foregoing sketch of his progress.

Other bequests having been made by Dr. Randolph for a picture-gallery, and Mr. Shalmondeley for the preservation of the Arundel and Pomphret marbles, the University contributed a considerable sum, and in 1840, invited designs for the erection of a building to meet these various intentions.

From the projects then submitted, thirty-four in number, that by Professor Cockerell, of which we now place before our readers an engraved view from the architect's own drawings, and a plan of the ground-floor,* was selected, and has since been completed by Messrs. Baker, the contractors, in a sound and admirable manner. The amount of the contract was 49,373*l.* It was commenced in April 1841, and completed in the same month of 1845.

The site, as shewn on the plan, wherein the northern boundary is marked by a dotted line, is extremely limited, and with other circumstances afterwards to be mentioned, called for considerable study in the arrangement of the building,—the whole extent we may remark, was 240 feet by 102 feet; the main front is in Beaumont-street, the east end is in St. Giles's, the leading approach to Oxford.

This end of the building is appropriated to the Taylor Institute, and comprises five good lecture-rooms, and a fine library on the first floor,—the latter is a cube of nearly 40 feet.

The party-wall which divides this part of the building from the University galleries, is at A, on the plan. The entrance to the Institute is in St. Giles's where there are four detached Ionic columns with a block of the entablature over each, bearing sculptured figures emblematical of Italy, France, Germany, and Spain.

The centre portico opens into an extensive sculpture gallery, the sides of which are formed into a series of recesses, by Doric antæ, projecting from the wall; the mode of lighting these, as well as the recesses B, (appropriated for statues of the nine muses) C, and D, is worthy of remark.

The walls of the gallery are coloured pale green, and the pilasters in imitation of red granite, at variance with the wishes of the architect. Irish green marble is extensively used in the floor, as a decoration. Amongst the works deposited here, is a collection of casts from the works of Chantrey, presented by Lady Chantrey. Above are spacious galleries for paintings; the principal of them is in the west wing, and is 96 feet long, 28 feet wide, and 34 feet high, lighted by six hexagonal lights in the ceiling, and two large windows at the end.

The walls are boarded and painted red, and have an inartificial and unfinished appearance, which will be removed when the number of pictures increases. This gallery already contains some very interesting works; amongst which may be mentioned a series of portraits of painters, by themselves; copies of Raffaelle's cartoons, by Cook; and Giulio Romano's copy of that wonderful picture, the School of Athens.

An adjacent gallery contains the celebrated collection of drawings by Michael Angelo.

To give elevation to the structure, the whole of it, together with the fore-court, is raised upon a terrace, faced with Witby stone. The spacious basement, or crypt, thus obtained light and airy, is appropriated for sculptural fragments, and already holds, amongst much that is worthless, some valuable relics of ancient art.

The accompanying engraving of the principal front, aided by the plan, renders verbal description almost unnecessary. On the side front of each wing, facing the fore-court, are four-attached Grecian Ionic columns, carrying blocks of entablature and vases, shewn in profile, similar to those on the front of each wing, with corresponding semi-circular openings in the face of the wall, terminating the windows, which occur between each column.

A figure of Apollo surmounts the pediment of the portico. This and the other sculpture, including the figures on the St. Giles's front, already mentioned, was executed under the direction of the architect by Mr. G. W. Nicholl.

It has been objected to this edifice, that the wings unduly preponderate over the centre building; and when seen at a little distance, where the roof of the wings, omitted in the drawing, comes into sight, this is certainly the case. The motive which led to this, however, is apparent enough, and should be taken into consideration when estimating the ability with which the architect has executed his task. At the western extremity, the building is attached to some ordinary dwelling-houses, and it was necessary therefore to render that portion of it conspicuous, for the purpose of separating it from them, and pointing it out unmistakeably as a public building. At the eastern end standing in a leading thoroughfare, the same predominance was required, and thence the result which has been questioned.

The central portico, of the same order as is adopted in the wings, connects the two parts, and marks the whole as one building. Although the order is Greek, taken from the Temple of Apollo Epicurius, at Bassæ, near Phigalia—a very singular and little-used example—the building must be considered as Italian in disposition, and claims for its architect great praise for originality and elegance.

In our general view of the building, the peculiarities of the order are not observable; and as it is little known and has been worked out with great pains by Mr. Cockerell, we shall next week give the details of it at large, with some particulars of the temple in question; in the discovery of which the accomplished professor, whose work in Oxford we have here illustrated, was mainly concerned.

MATTER FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE LEGISLATURE.

IN THE APPROACHING SESSION.

Less attentive observers of the aspect of the political world than we are, have not failed to remark the decreasing interest of questions which once absorbed the attention of the legislature. A fusion of parties, to use a common phrase, is in progress, and questions are now debated in St. Stephen's, which have some interest for others besides the friends and opponents of ministers. Even matters of art are sometimes the subjects of discussion, and legislative enactments have been made with a main view to the benefit of the illustrious classes. Seated by our first fire, our thoughts naturally run into the current which the season of the year induces. Abbot Boniface could trace out towers, and steeples, and fret-work in the embers, and the contemplative mood yields us suggestions of deeper moment to ruminate upon.

With the lighting of the first fire, post-horses are turned homewards, steam-boats bear a returning cargo of tourists, and the thoughts of men come back to the business of life. A kind of new year it is, a more decided commencement than the actual first of January. Societies are re-organised, cabinet councils are more frequently mentioned, and members of Parliament begin to talk of "next session." It is the moment for plans to be matured, and measures to be commenced, and we should be early to move in matters about which we have so deep an interest. For what can be of greater moment to all, than that which may occupy the attention of the government in the next session of Parliament. The comfort and health, and the intellectual improvement of the people are now to become the objects of state attention. The delay has been long and culpable; but all are at length convinced of the immense magnitude of the evils which must be removed.

It is the *immediate* benefit of the people, which should be always the most important object of the legislature; for this, questions of temporary importance should be terminated

* Stone-buildings, Lincoln's-inn; Six clerks' office, Chancery-lane; a villa at Richmond for Sir Charles Asgill; Sly House, Dover-street; and Lord Grimston's seat at Gorhambury, the Duke of Newcastle's house at Clumber, and great part of the Bank of England, are amongst his works.

† See Knight's "Cyclopædia." The writer of the notice of Taylor in that work, says he was rarely in bed after four in the morning.

* See p. 511.

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